

ELDERLY POPULATION BY REGION

In all OECD countries, populations aged 65 years and over have dramatically increased over the last 30 years, both in size and as a percentage of total population. Elderly people, it turns out, tend to be concentrated in few areas within each country, which means that a small number of regions will have to face a number of specific social and economic challenges raised by ageing population.

Definition

The elderly population is the number of inhabitants of a given region aged 65 or older. The population can be either the average annual population or the population at a specific date during the year considered. The average population during a calendar year is generally calculated as the arithmetic mean of the population on 1 January of two consecutive years.

The elderly dependency rate is defined as the ratio between the elderly population and the working age (15-64 years) population.

Overview

In most OECD countries the population is ageing. Due to higher life expectancy and low fertility rates, the elderly population (those aged 65 years and over), accounts for 15% of the OECD population in 2012, up from just over 12% 17 years earlier. The proportion of elderly population is remarkably lower in the emerging economies (South Africa, Brazil and China) and Mexico, Turkey and Chile.

The elderly population in OECD countries has increased more than three times faster than the total population between 1995 and 2012. The rate of ageing between different parts of a country can be quite different, as an increase in the geographic concentration of the elderly may arise from inward migration of the elderly or by ageing “in place” because the younger generations have moved out of the regions.

The ratio of the elderly to the working age population, the elderly dependency rate, is steadily growing in OECD countries. The elderly dependency rate gives an indication of the balance between the retired and the economically active population. In 2012 this ratio was 23% in OECD countries, with substantial differences between countries (38% in Japan versus 10% in Mexico). Differences among regions within the same countries were also large. The higher the regional elderly dependency rate, the higher the challenges faced by regions in generating wealth and sufficient resources to provide for the needs of the population. Concerns may arise about the financial self-sufficiency of these regions to generate taxes to pay for these services for the elderly.

Comparability

As for the other regional statistics, the comparability of elderly population data is affected by differences in the definition of the regions and the different geography of rural and urban communities, both within and among countries.

All the regional data shown here refer to small regions with the exception of Brazil, China, India, the Russian Federation and South Africa.

Sources

- OECD (2013), *OECD Regions at a Glance*, OECD Publishing.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2011), *OECD Regional Outlook*, OECD Publishing.
- Oliveira Martins J., et al. (2005), “The Impact of Ageing on Demand, Factor Markets and Growth”, *OECD Economics Department Working Papers*, No. 420.

Online databases

- *OECD Regional Database*.

Websites

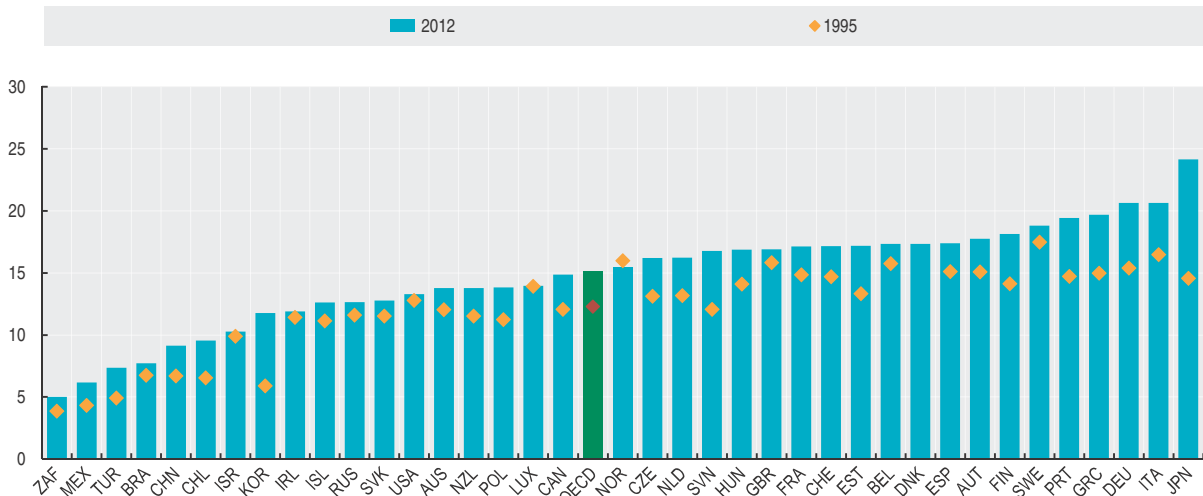
- *Regions at a Glance Interactive*, rag.oecd.org.
- *Regional statistics and indicators*, www.oecd.org/gov/regional/statisticsindicators.



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Elderly population

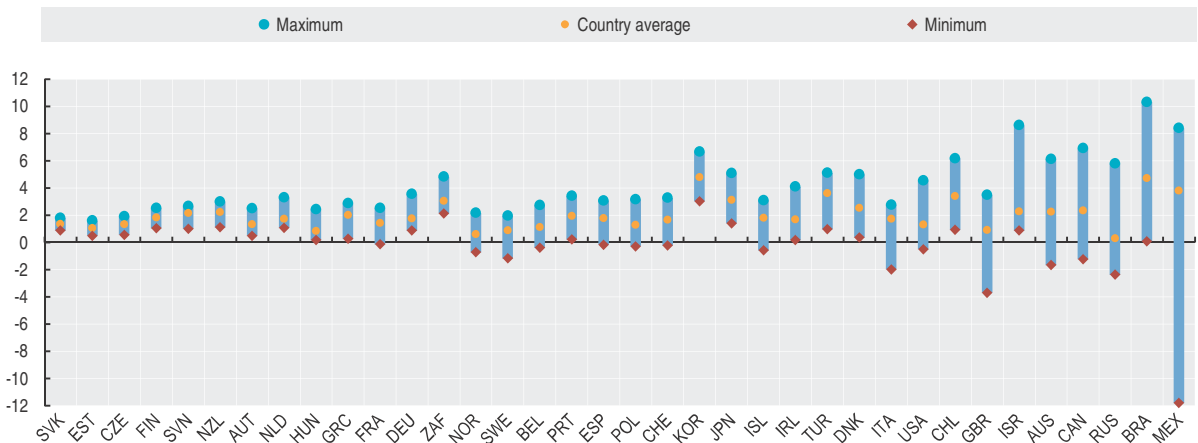
As a percentage of total population



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933024625>

Regional elderly population

Average annual growth in percentage, 1995-2012



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933024644>

Elderly dependency rate in urban and rural regions

Percentage, 2012



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933024663>



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